

Colin Mackey

AmeriCorps VISTA Member of the Year

Colin Mackey began serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA member at Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area last October to help low-income homeowners make repairs on their homes. As the Community Outreach Coordinator, he helped low-income homeowners in Columbia, Iowa and Sauk Counties, many of whom are members of vulnerable populations, veterans, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities

Colin quickly launched into his service. Within weeks of his arrival, he conducted trainings for area Veterans Services Specialists and social workers to assist clients with the home repair program applications.

A quick learner, Colin identified funding opportunities and wrote grant applications and environmental reviews, which enabled Habitat to dramatically increase their home repair program budget of \$30,000 by securing \$114,000 in grant funding. He worked to obtain certification for Habitat as an Aging in Place Specialist through the National Association of Home Builders and registration as an approved VA Builder with the US Department of Veterans Affairs. These designations allowed them to provide more comprehensive services with access to additional grant funding.

His service helped Habitat dramatically increase the number of people it served. After just the first six months of his service, and despite the ongoing pandemic, Colin helped 30 families repair their homes, nearly doubling the 16 homeowners that had been served the entire previous year.

The impact of Colin's service did not stop at his local affiliate. He expanded his leadership to provide training for other Habitat for Humanity affiliates across the country to best serve their vulnerable populations. Colin led a national presentation at Habitat for Humanity International's annual spring conference alongside representatives from the Disabled American Veterans and Paralyzed Veterans of America organizations. He then presented similar information to 54 affiliates in Michigan in June. These presentations centered around building relationships with local veterans organizations and informing them about potential funding options that were unfortunately often going unused.

Colin's AmeriCorps VISTA service has helped Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area and Habitat affiliates across the nation fulfill their mission to "build homes, communities, and hope." He quickly made a significant impact on those living in the local communities by expanding the ability for Habitat to provide needed home repairs. The knowledge he passed on through trainings and presentations, coupled with the grant funding he obtained, will have a lasting legacy for the citizens of Wisconsin and people throughout the country.

